

one wishes that the editor had decided to include a complete photographic record of the tabula in it, too, even with a slight increase in the price.

*Harri Kiiskinen*

*The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*. Edited by WALTER SCHEIDEL – IAN MATTHEW MORRIS – RICHARD PAUL SALLER. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-78053-7. XVI, 942 pp. GBP 120.

It is impossible to approach a monument like this as an ordinary book. After all, this is a book with many of the biggest names working with the economic history of the Graeco-Roman world taking part in a joint effort to update the outdated views many general accounts still present of the level and nature of economic activity in the Classical World.

The book begins (Part I. Determinants of economic performance) by analyzing some central constituents of economic activity. Robert Sallares on Ecology, Walter Scheidel on Demography, Richard P. Saller on Household and gender, Bruce W. Frier and Dennis P. Kehoe on Law and economic institutions and Helmut Schneide on Technology set out to define the common characteristics defining economic activity in general in their particular instantiations of Graeco-Roman Antiquity. It is clearly their intention to provide the "big picture", the common framework the Classical World shared. There are two sides to this approach: on one hand, it is worthwhile for the reader to get an introduction to some of the very defining features of the Classical World, but on the other hand, this kind of approach often leaves little room for change and development – a problem tackled differently by different contributions. Saller has chosen to separate Greek and Roman cultures in his presentation, whereas Sallares' view of ecology is so static that one is left to wonder whether there was any environmental or climate change at all.

The rest of the book is organized around periods and temporal regions, with the exception of Classical Greece and the Early Roman Empire. The past is not a democratic thing, and whereas for most periods and regions, the texts are scarce, and archaeology provides the fullest material, these two places and periods are the traditional battle ground for scholars, since the interplay between literary sources, increasing analyses of the archaeological material and the very specialized evidence of the inscriptions provide ample grounds for varying interpretations.

In the second part (Part II. Early Mediterranean economies and the Near East) the contributions are divided according to a very traditional sequence: John Bennet on the Aegean Bronze Age, Ian Morris on Early Iron Age Greece, Michael Dietler's *The Iron Age in the western Mediterranean* and Robin Osborne on Archaic Greece follow the periods of a very traditional view of history, but the addition of Peter R. Bedford's *The Persian Near East* expands the view well into this often ignored Empire.

The third part (Part III. Classical Greece) is divided into three chapters, describing the patterns of production (John K. Davies), distribution (Astrid Möller) and consumption (Sitta von Reden) – a structured approach that is used also in the sixth part (Part VI. The Early Roman Empire), where in addition to production (Dennis P. Kehoe), distribution (Neville Morley) and consumption (Willem M. Jongman), there is also a chapter on the state and the

economy by Elio Lo Cascio. There are pros and cons to this approach. One of the major bonuses is that it has allowed for more people to participate in the book. The obvious negative side, that production, distribution and consumption cannot really be separated from each other as each has a strong effect on the others, is much alleviated by precisely this bonus, since instead of one presentation of the economy-minded practices, it gives the reader three slightly different views on the subject.

Between these two parts, we skim over the period between, even here following the very traditional division to the Hellenistic period (Part IV. The Hellenistic States), with Robartus J. van Spek on the Hellenistic Near East, Joseph G. Manning on Hellenistic Egypt and Gary Reger on Hellenistic Greece and western Asia Minor, and to Early Italy (Part V. Early Italy and the Roman Republic) with Jean-Paul Morel on the Early Rome and Italy and William V. Harris on the Late Republic.

In the second to last part (Part VII. Regional Development in the Roman Empire) the reader gets an overview of the developments in different parts of the Roman Empire, from Philippe Leveau's *The western provinces*, Susan E. Alcock's *The eastern Mediterranean*, Dominic Rathbone's *Roman Egypt* and David Cherry's *The frontier zones*. The book concludes with an epilogue (Part VIII. Epilogue) by Andrea Giardina: *The transition to late Antiquity*.

It is impossible to embark on a detailed review of a book this size, but some remarks perhaps can be made. First of all, the book is excellent. The authors have made an effort to produce contributions of very high quality which the reader will find well written, concise, and full of references to other research. The bibliography is immense, and is a valuable reference for anyone. Some minor editorial lapses can be found, however, like the entry in the bibliography for the work "Fine and Leopold 1993", which in note 1 on page 385 is cited as "Leopold and Fine 1993", leading to some confusion. Spelling errors are very rare, though, and the overall quality of the editing is high. In a book with this many contributions, it is also always nice to see the authors referring to each other's contributions in the same work, giving an impressions of a real joint effort.

The overall high quality of the book then leaves this reviewer the opportunity to offer some criticism, especially regarding some basic principles that seem to have governed the production process.

First of all, it seems to me that the book sidesteps the whole primitivist-modernist controversy by being so ashamedly modernist that no one would even dream of questioning whether the concepts used at least in the first part of the book had any existence in Antiquity, other than what our analysis gives them. In this sense, the book denies M.I. Finley's perhaps largest and most usable contribution: his relativism, and his scepticism towards our concepts.

In the same way, one can really question whether the major emphasis given to questions of economic growth really is a reasonable thing to do. From the point of view of a modern day economist, the question is intriguing, especially if one is trying to argue against some simplistic models leading from the stagnant, backward past to the glorious present. By showing that economic growth also existed in the past, before the industrial revolution, one can obviously call for some scepticism regarding the model-creation of modern day economists where once the curves go even slightly up, they never go down again. But what is the point of these discussions for the rest of us? Do we understand the Greek and Roman cultures any better after reading this book?

A striking omission is an almost complete lack of any environmental history. Sallares' chapter on the ecology of the Mediterranean informs the reader very well about the varied and variable climate of the Mediterranean region, the physical environment, the risks and hazards of the environment, and the endemic diseases affecting ancient populations. What seems to be lacking, however, is a general framework for the history of the region, meaning a description of the temporal changes in the environment affecting human populations over time. For example, the chapters by John Bennet and Ian Morris on the Aegean Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Greece (respectively) would greatly benefit from a more environmentally conscious approach, both internally and externally. The book does not provide any "big picture" of environmental and climate change to which the development described in these chapters could relate, although environmental factors are hinted at as possible causes in both chapters.

Mostly these criticisms are just differences in point of view, and should be taken as such, except perhaps for the lack of the environmental approach. They reflect more perhaps the way in which economic matters are seen in relation to other "parts" of the past. In the case of this book the economy is often given a position where it reacts to "hard" things, like disasters, wars and conquests, and in its turn, affects, also occasionally determines, the "soft" things, society, culture and so on. This perhaps explains why after reading many of the contributions, while learning so much more of the ancients' world, I still could not fathom any better why they did what they did and thought the way they thought. In this study, the ancient world is explained to us in words and concepts that make it understandable to us, but how the ancients understood their world and conceptualized their actions is still pretty much left in the dark.

After all the merits this book has, one is still tempted to conclude that it is a monumental achievement vividly demonstrating, why economic matters are 1) too complicated; 2) too important; and 3) too interesting to be left only to the economists.

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TAKESHI AMEMIYA: *Economy and Economics of Ancient Greece*. Routledge Explorations in Economic History, 33. Routledge, London – New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-415-70154-9. XXIV, 184 pp. GBP 70.

The author of this book, Takeshi Amemiya, is an econometrician of some renown, and one could say that this shows in the book. This relatively thin book, which appeared in a series of Economic history, is very unlike most of the other books on the same subject the reviewer has encountered before. It is divided into three main parts: 1. History, society, culture; 2. Economy; 3. Economics.

In the first part, A. provides the reader with "background" material: the part contains chapters on the history (chap. 1) and society and culture (chap. 2) of Athens, as well as a chapter dedicated to the particularities of the Athenian democracy (chap. 3), with a concluding chapter about the successfulness of the Athenian democracy (chap. 4). One can hardly call these chapters works of history, as they look and perform better as thematically organized collections of data. In the chapter on history, for example, the "Classical Age" and